

Good Stories for Children

BY
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HOW PAUL RESCUED HIS LITTLE SISTER AND A PRINCESS

Helped by a Wonderful Whispering Shell
He Got the Better of a Terrible Giant
Who Gave Him Work to Do

After Killing the Giant and Bringing Girls
Home He Married the Princess, of
Course, and Became a Writer

EVERYBODY has heard of the storks that bring babies, but very few know about that dreadful bird called the Bairnodactyl, which steals away little babies almost as soon as they are born. I cannot describe this bird, for nobody has ever seen it. But if you should leave your baby sister or brother out all night, it is quite likely that the Bairnodactyl would swoop down and carry off the infant. That it does with the children is not known either, but this story will tell you what happened to Claire, the baby sister of Paul Rogers, who was stolen by the bird and given to the giant Gilligen, who kept her until she grew up and made her do his housework in company with the Princess Alicia, another baby captive, and how the wise and noble Paul rescued both of them.

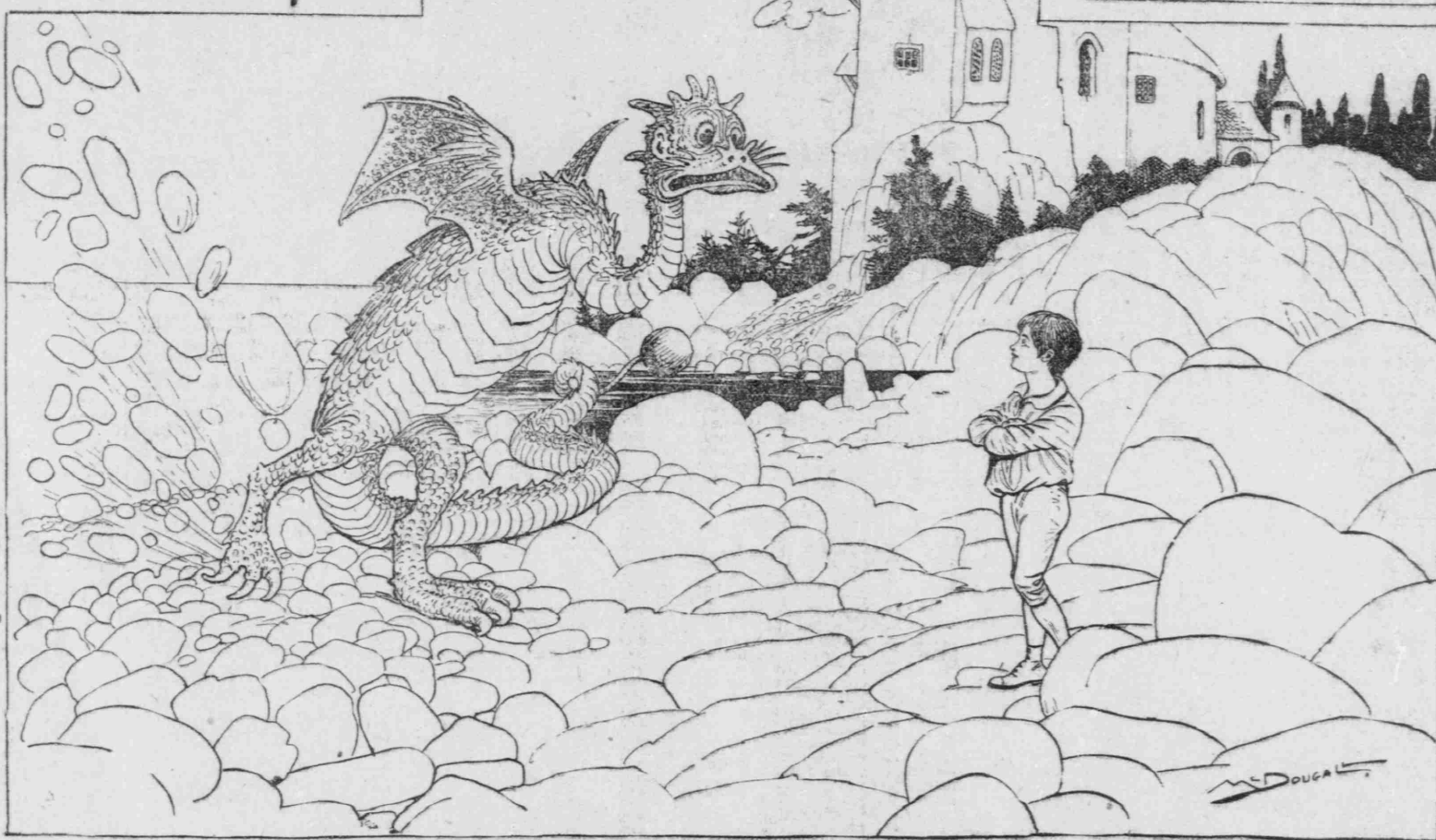
Gilligen was not only a giant, but he was an ogre, and a good deal of a wizard, too, for everything about his great farm worked by magic. He had a cow that gave milk punch, trees that yielded hot pancakes and ham sandwiches, roasted chickens walking around ready to eat, candy rabbits, popcorn bushes and lemonade springs, as well as many other wonderful contrivances and queer animals wherever he looked. His farm was so big that a railroad train could not cross it in two days, but he was always wandering around outside of it, and only came home to meals, which Claire and the Princess Alicia had to have ready or he would fly into such a terrible passion that the earth shook for miles around, the pancakes fell off the trees and the animals quaked with terror. A wide sea washed the farm on three sides, and high mountains, with a great, dark forest beyond, made a barrier that none dared pass on the northern side. In the sea and in the forest were awful roaring animals that frightened every one who even dared to approach the region, and, beside that, all knew that the giant lived there, and people kept far away from his neighborhood, you may be sure. Of course, had anybody known that two beautiful maidens were held captive by Gilligen, every brave and noble young man in the country would have risked his life to rescue them. But all were ignorant of this fact. So they toiled on year by year, growing more and more beautiful daily, at the brutal, coarse Gilligen never noticed how lovely they were, but merely observed once in a while that they were not fat enough to eat yet, and that was what he was saving them for. Meanwhile brother Paul also grew to be a big, strong, brave boy, who was always going hunting and fishing or playing games which increased his strength and daring. He knew every secret cave in the mountains, every valley where game was to be found, every lake and brook where the big fish were to be caught, and there was not a bird or beast that he didn't know all about in all the land. His father often wished that he would stay at home and work on the farm, but he never could remain there more than a few days without stealing away to the woods with his gun, or to the seashore with his fishing rod. Of course, he went to school when there was any, but in that country it was so hard to get school teachers that half the time the school was closed and the children had to study the best they could at home. Paul often used to take his books and go to the woods or the shore and study for hours, but sometimes when strange animals came stealing past or big fish leaped and splashed in the water near shore he found it very difficult to keep his attention fixed upon his studies. Just imagine: trying to look at a grammar when a keen-eyed weasel came leaping by you in pursuit of a frightened quail, or a blacksnake wound stealthily up the slender trunk of a willow to steal the eggs from a tiny wren's nest among the leaves. No wonder Paul had to stop and attend to these things, as any boy with good red blood in his veins would.

HIS LAST FISHING TRIP

He was a big boy of fifteen, when he suddenly resolved to give up all this woodland roving and settle down to learn to be an up-to-date farmer and show his old haysack dad how to run an agricultural concern with all the modern improvements—automobile reapers, steam thrashers, electric binders and liquid air dairies and all the rest of the new wrinkles of which he had read advertisements in the agricultural weeklies. So he decided to have one last hunt and one last fishing trip, after which he would put away his gun and rod and use them only on holidays. He concluded to go fishing first because there had been a great storm, and he thought that the fish would be very hungry and bite better; so to the shore he hurried. He found the tide far out and the strand strewn with shells, dead fish, seaweed and wreckage for many miles, the evidences of a violent tempest, and he walked along a great distance looking for a good place to cast his line. Suddenly he spied a tremendous king crab, the largest he had ever seen, lying upon its back far up on the sand, but vigorously kicking and trying to turn over.

"Jerusalem!" cried Paul. "That is really a king crab—the king of all crabs! I don't believe anybody ever saw such a whopper! I'll take him home and hang his shell up on the wall as a trophy of my last day out!"

"Let me go! Let me go!" cried the crab. "I'll reward you well if you spare me!"



THE CREATURE WENT TO WORK WHILE PAUL WATCHED

Astonished to hear a crab speak, for this had never happened to Paul before in all his wanderings, he stared at the crustacean in amazement. The crab added: "Come, come! Turn me over and put me in the water, and you'll not be sorry."

"It appears that you must be a new variety of king crab!" cried Paul. "I didn't know any of you could talk!" He turned the crab over, and it wagged its stiff spike of a tail to feel if it was all there. Then it said: "Thank you. I suppose that you have decided to spare me?"

"I couldn't have the heart to destroy a crab that talks as well as you do," said Paul. "But tell me how you learned."

THE BIG CRAB REWARDED HIM

"I am the king of all king crabs," it replied. "I got caught in the undertow last night, and before I could swim away was tossed high and dry on the shore, and upside down at that. Unfortunately even the king can't do business on his back, and I was helpless. I am mighty glad you came along, for I would have soon perished in the hot sun."

"Well, I'll carry you to the water, as you seem very much exhausted," said the boy. "But I'd like to have a long talk with you after you have recovered, for there are many things you can tell me about the sea and what's in its depths, if you are willing."

"Glad to do it," replied the crab. "Give me a few minutes in the sea, and I'll be a new crab."

Paul placed him in the sea, and he shot down into deep water, while the boy wondered if he would really return. But in a few minutes he resurfaced, his dark shell shining like a mirror and looking every inch a king of crabs. He came out, and for several hours they sat there, Paul listening with all his ears to the wonderful things the crustacean told him about the wonders of the deep. He could not in twenty years—no, not in twenty lifetimes—learn from books the strange things that the crab revealed, and in after years, when he wrote in a great book many of these facts, all the world wondered at his knowledge, and he became famous indeed; so after all, his lack of schooling was not noticed.

It was almost night when he said: "Now it is growing dark, and I must go home. I am very much obliged to you for telling me all this, and I'll never forget you. I hope I'll see you often." He was about to go, when the crab said:

"I promised to reward you for saving my life, and I'm not going to do it by telling you all about the sea bottom. I am sure. That's nothing. You meet me here to-morrow at daylight, and I'll give you a handsome present."

Next morning Paul was there, you may be certain, and out came the king crab carrying a beautiful shell that was colored so fantastically and so charmingly that it dazzled Paul to look at it—a spiral, pearly, transparent shell, which was handsomer than anybody ever saw before. The crab held it up and said:

"Take this as a reward. It is a whispering shell. Place it to your ear, and you will hear the music of the deep sea, the song of the mermaids, the murmurs of the sirens, the sighing of the fishes, the call of the sea birds, and when you ask anything of it it will answer you in whispers. No matter what you

wish to know, it will tell you faithfully and correctly at once; and do not be afraid to ask it the most difficult questions. It will never fail you."

Paul said farewell to the crab, and he slid into the sea and vanished. The boy sat in the sand listening to the strange song of the shell for an hour, then began to ask all manner of questions of his new-found treasure. No matter what he asked the shell gave him an answer and filled him with mixed wonder and delight. Hour after hour he sat there until the noonday sun warmed him that dinner time had come, and he rather reluctantly arose, for, after all, Paul had the healthy appetite of all growing boys. After dinner Paul told his father all about his adventure with the crab, and the rest of the afternoon was spent asking all sorts of questions regarding the best way to make the farm pay; and when Paul's mother came home at night from a visit to her sister's she was told about the wonderful shell. The mother immediately began to tremble, and, seizing the shell, she asked in a voice that shook with anxiety:

"Where is my baby—my little Claire?"

The shell began to whisper, and the mother's face paled as she heard all about the giant Gilligen and the two lovely prisoners. She listened with patience until all was told, and then she related it to the others.

"I will seek for her!" cried Paul. "I'll go at once and find this giant's farm by the sea and rescue Claire!"

FOUND A POT OF MONEY

"In the first place, if you seek under a fallen tree behind a ruined house at Hominy Hill Cross-roads you will find an iron pot full of gold, buried there by Captain Kidd two hundred years ago. With this money you must buy a fast automobile, one of those red ones that scoot along at the rate of fifty-two miles an hour and take your breath away. Then we can travel comfortably, as well as rapidly, for any day the giant may take it into his head to eat the girls, for it's about the time for the Bairnodactyl to bring him some new ones."

So when they arrived at the cross-roads Paul dug under the tree, found the money, and when he got to the city he bought the largest and reddest automobile he could find. Then he loaded her up with the best things to eat—bags of crullers, mince pies, chocolate cakes, cinnamon buns, candy, cookies, sandwiches and everything nice, so that they would not suffer the awful pangs of hunger that come to a boy between meals, and off they started for Gilligen's magic farm by the sea. Over vast sandy desert plains so lonely that for days they saw nothing but vultures and insurance agents, which, of course, are everywhere; along winding rivers and lonely lakes, over high mountains covered always with deep snow, and down dark valleys, through dense

forests filled with fierce wolves, bears and other animals, who fled from the red automobile in great fright, until at last they came to the woods that surrounded the mountains to the north of Gilligen's farm. Through the forest they went slowly and over the mountains cautiously, until they were on the farm, when the shell told him how to proceed:

"You must leave the automobile here, hidden in the bushes, and go on foot to Gilligen's house, where you must tell him that you are lost and ask for shelter. He will give you some difficult tasks to do, but by my help you will accomplish all he sets you at. Afterward we will see what is to be done, for I do not know exactly how he will proceed, for he is a pretty good wizard, you know."

FOUND A LONG-LOST SPADE

Paul walked to Gilligen's immense house, and, finding the door wide open, strolled into the hall. There was no one visible, so he went into the dining room, and then, as he saw nobody there, he went to the kitchen, where he saw the two lovely girls peeling potatoes. When they saw him they turned pale with amazement and red with delight, for they saw that it was a boy. Neither of them had ever seen a live boy, but from the giant's picture books they knew what he was. But when he told Claire that he was her brother Paul she almost fainted, for she knew that the giant would eat him at once. He only laughed when she told him of his peril and said that it was as likely that he would eat Gilligen, unless he was too tough. So when the girls saw how brave he was they grew cheerful and merry. They showed him all over the farm and ate lots of the candies that he had brought for them. After they had related to him the simple story of their lives and told him all that they could about Gilligen's habits, it became dark, and soon the footsteps of the approaching giant shook the ground. He entered his house, and Paul was astounded at his size, but not at all alarmed. He spoke to Gilligen, who in turn was surprised, and asked Paul how he got there. Paul replied that he had lost his way in the forest, and wished to be employed on the farm, as he was a good farmer. The giant laughed, but said:

"All right, my son. You can work for me, but you'll find me a hard taskmaster if you don't please me."

"I'll do my best," replied Paul.

"If you'll find my spade, which has been lost for more than a hundred years, I think you'll suit me as a helper," said Gilligen. "I have searched high and low for it for years, but it's gone, I fear, for good and all."

Paul secretly held the shell to his ear, and it promptly told him that the missing spade was lying at the bottom of a deep brook near the house. He said to the giant:

"Your spade is not far away, but it's too big for me to lift. Come with me, and I'll show you where it lies."

When the giant felt in the brook and drew forth the spade he was much pleased, and said:

"I see that you will be useful. Now tell me how you knew where it was."

"I cannot tell you that," said Paul.

"That was well done. Now, you must go up on the hill, where the Plinkidorm lives, and clear away

all the stones there and take them down to the seashore, where I want to build me a wharf."

Paul followed Gilligen to the foot of the hill, where the giant halted, for he himself was a little bit afraid of the Plinkidorm, as it was a most enormous animal.

He said: "You go right up. Never mind him, but begin to carry the stones down." And then he went away, giving Paul an opportunity to consult his shell, which said to him:

"Do not be alarmed at the size of the Plinkidorm, but walk boldly up to him, ordering him to proceed to work, and if he refuses threaten to tell his mother on him, and you will see what you will see."

Paul followed these instructions and climbed to the top of the hill, where an enormous beast sprang ferociously at him, its scales rattling like a runaway tin can, great flames pouring forth from its nostrils and ears, while an iron ball at the end of its tail thumped and pounded the stones with a din like thunder.

The bold and untrifled boy shook his fist at the approaching monster and bade it get to work.

"At what?" cried the Plinkidorm, halting in astonishment.

"Remove all these stones at once," said Paul, "and carry them down to the seashore, or that will happen to you which will cause you to shake so that your teeth will fall out, your scales will drop off and your fire be extinguished from sheer fright."

"And if I refuse?" asked the Plinkidorm, turning up its nose in contempt and taking a stealthy step forward.

"Then," said Paul, "I will go and tell your mother on you."

The Plinkidorm let out an awful yell of terror, and then, writhing and twisting, it fell flat upon its belly and crawled abjectly to Paul's feet.

"Oh, spare me! Spare me! Anything but that!" it cried, trembling all over.

"I know how you feel," said Paul, "and I'll have pity on you. Now get to work and hustle all those stones down to the seashore and toss them out into the water, so that Gilligen will have a wharf ready for him when he returns."

The gigantic creature, only too pleased to escape the awful fate of having his mother informed as to his conduct, went to work with alacrity, while Paul sat down to watch the stones fly.

In less than an hour he had the satisfaction of seeing the hill bare of boulders, and, thanking the Plinkidorm politely, he returned to the giant's castle.

Gilligen soon returned, and was enraged as well as frightened to see that the boy had accomplished the task, but he had another in readiness, which he knew would tax even a wizard's resources.

"You must now catch me," said he, "the great deep-sea white whale that no man has ever seen. I will go and take a nap while you do it."

"All right," said Paul, nothing daunted. "That will be an easy job."

The giant laid down on the shore and pretended to go to sleep, while Paul held the shell to his ear.

"Go to the stable," said the shell, "and there you will find a black cow with many white hairs in its tail. Pull out all the white hairs and tie them together, and you will have a fish line that will capture the whale. On the apple tree behind the stable there is growing a single apple. Pluck it and tie it by the stem to the line and toss it into the sea. Then seat yourself by the giant's feet and sing in a loud and monotonous manner 'The Old Oaken Bucket,' which will cause Gilligen to sink into deep slumber, when you must tie the line around his big toe and await results."

DEATH OF THE GIANT

Paul did as directed, the giant watching him closely in fear and trembling as he tied together the cow's hairs. But when he had sung the "Old Oaken Bucket" for some time sleep overcame Gilligen, and he did not see Paul throw the apple into the sea, and so, when a few minutes later the great white whale seized the line with a mighty tug and Gilligen awoke to find himself being dragged by his big toe into the sea, he raised an awful yell.

The whale, however, had taken a hold upon the line which was impossible to break, and all the giant's efforts could not prevent his dreadful fate.

Little by little he was drawn by an irresistible force farther and farther out to sea, and soon only his head was visible above the waves, and after a time, while Paul watched, he disappeared entirely.

Then Paul returned to the house, got Claire and the Princess and took them to his automobile. A few hours later they were far, far away from Gilligen's magic realm, and in two days had arrived at home, where his parents went wild with joy at their return. But he found that five years had passed while he had been performing these three feats, and he was now a man. So he married the Princess and took to writing wonderful books under the guidance of the magic shell, and now he is the most celebrated author in all the world, but he never signs his real name, so people will never know who this story is about, for if he did he would forever be pestered by all sorts of questions and have no time to write at all.

WALT McDUGALL.

